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Sporkin judgeship pondered in secret

By Bill Gertz
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The Senate Judiciary Committee, in a rare secret meeting, yesterday questioned CIA Director William Casey and several other witnesses on the nomination of agency general counsel Stanley Sporkin to a federal judgeship.

The committee, which Friday will resume its consideration of the nomination, is investigating allegations that Mr. Sporkin, a close Casey friend, acted improperly during a CIA leak investigation several years ago.

Mr. Sporkin, a former Securities and Exchange Commission enforcement chief, was first nominated to the bench last year.

His nomination has sparked a controversy over whether Mr. Sporkin arranged "pro bono," or free, legal counsel and did more than advise a former CIA official that he needed a lawyer during a probe into the disclosure of classified CIA secrets.

Mr. Sporkin has said that the controversy involves "my role in recommending and assisting [the official] in obtaining counsel."

"It was strictly in my role as the attorney for the CIA," Mr. Sporkin told reporters. "This was not a person I knew that well. This was strictly carrying out my responsibilities."

Mr. Sporkin arranged for former Watergate prosecutor Seymour Glanzer to represent former CIA National Intelligence Officer Charles E. Waterman during the CIA investigation. Mr. Glanzer, in a recent interview, denied he worked "for free" but declined to specify what financial arrangements were made during the probe.

The investigation focused on a leak of CIA details on Middle East political, military and economic intelligence that was discovered in June 1982.

Mr. Waterman left the CIA in late 1984. He was a senior Middle East intelligence analyst and deputy chairman of the National Intelligence Council, and he now works as a foreign affairs consultant and reporter for the Christian Science Monitor.

Mr. Casey was the lead-off witness when the committee called its session in a secure fourth floor hearing room at the U.S. Capitol. All but three of the 11 witnesses scheduled to testify, mostly CIA and Justice Department officials, were questioned yesterday. Mr. Sporkin is expected to testify when the hearing resumes Friday morning.

Committee aides said it was the first time a hearing has been closed for national security reasons.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a closed session in 1982 on the nomination of Clarence Pendleton as U.S. Civil Rights Commission chairman and held another closed session in 1983 on a judicial nominee for the federal court in Puerto Rico, according to a Senate aide.

Mr. Sporkin was appointed CIA general counsel in 1981 by Mr. Casey, even though he had no experience in national security affairs and, as SEC enforcement chief, had advocated more open government. He had worked under Mr. Casey at the SEC from 1971 to 1973.

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